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General and complete disarmament

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them, and consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to the requests of the General Assembly contained in its resolutions 72/57 on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, 72/40 on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them and 71/64 on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures.

In the Secretary-General's new agenda for disarmament, set out in the document entitled "Securing Our Common Future: an Agenda for Disarmament", he underscored the priority of "disarmament that saves lives". The present report highlights the major achievements in that regard of the Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and those made in the implementation of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, as well as the international cooperation and assistance efforts in support of the implementation of those instruments.

The present report also contains a summary of the activities undertaken during the reporting period by the following mechanisms: Coordinating Action on Small Arms; Group of Interested States for Practical Disarmament Measures; and United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation. Information on recent efforts to support the application of the International Small Arms Control Standards by States and other entities is also included in the report.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 72/57 on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-third session on the implementation of the resolution.

2. In its resolution 72/40 on assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them, the General Assembly invited the Secretary-General and those States and organizations that were in a position to do so to continue to provide assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and collecting them. In the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to consider the matter and to report to the Assembly at its seventy-third session on the implementation of the resolution.

3. In its resolution 71/64 on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its seventy-third session a report on the implementation of practical disarmament measures, taking into consideration the activities of the Group of Interested States for Practical Disarmament Measures.

4. With a view to ensuring a coherent and consistent approach to overlapping and mutually reinforcing issues, the above-mentioned requests are addressed in the present consolidated report.

II. Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament

5. The Secretary-General launched his new agenda for disarmament, as set out in the document entitled "Securing Our Common Future: an Agenda for Disarmament",[1] in Geneva in May 2018. In it, he acknowledged that disarmament was a driving force for international peace and security and a useful tool for ensuring national security. Disarmament and arms regulation contribute to the upholding of the principles of humanity, promote sustainable development and safeguard the protection of civilians in conflict. The agenda has three main priorities: disarmament to save humanity, disarmament that saves lives and disarmament for future generations. It creates a clear and credible vision for sustainable security that serves humanity, draws from the past and builds towards the future.

6. The second priority of the agenda for disarmament, disarmament that saves lives, places human beings at the centre of efforts relating to conventional arms control, including small arms and light weapons. Through the agenda, the United Nations has recommitted to addressing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, including through the establishment of a new funding mechanism. The Secretary-General will establish a multi-partner trust facility on small arms control within the standing Peacebuilding Fund, which will be open to Member States, United Nations system partners and external stakeholders, such as relevant civil society organizations. It will support comprehensive and integrated approaches to small arms regulation and control.

7. The new facility will create conditions for addressing all relevant dimensions of the problem of illicit small arms. The design of country-specific programmes will prioritize addressing the gaps in current funding and activities. Practical arms control measures, such as weapons collection and destruction, will be combined and reinforced with adequate legal and policy frameworks, institutional arrangements, proper stockpile management, a safer humanitarian space, education and awareness-

[1] Available from www.un.org/disarmament/sg-agenda.

raising, law enforcement measures and capacity-building, including in marking weapons, record-keeping and tracing, and data and evidence collection and analysis. Response measures will be aimed not only at addressing specific problems, but also at changing cultural attitudes and perceptions regarding small arms, including those relating to the gender dimension of the issue.

III. Activities carried out by the United Nations in the implementation of resolutions 72/57, 72/40 and 71/64

A. Third United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

8. The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons are universal frameworks for addressing the scourge of illicit flows of small arms and light weapons. Their implementation continues to be a priority for the international community.

9. The Third Review Conference of the Programme of Action was held in New York from 18 to 29 June 2018, with Jean-Claude Brunet (France) as the president of the Conference. The Conference was preceded by a Preparatory Committee, which met for one week in March.

10. The Third Review Conference concluded with the unanimous adoption of a substantive outcome document (A/CONF.192/2018/RC/3). In adopting the outcome document, States renewed their commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument and agreed upon an implementation plan and follow-up process for the period 2018–2024.

11. States highlighted the significant progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, while acknowledging that, nonetheless, implementation remained uneven. States acknowledged that challenges and obstacles, including a lack of resources and differing capacities, must be overcome in order to achieve further progress.

12. States continued to hold divergent views on the scope of the Programme of Action. In a departure from the practice at previous Review Conferences, ammunition was explicitly included in the outcome document, reflecting the growing importance of the issue to many States. They recognized that, in strengthening the implementation of the Programme of Action, those States that applied the provisions of the Programme of Action to small arms and light weapons ammunition could exchange and apply the relevant experiences, lessons learned and best practices acquired within the framework of other relevant instruments. States welcomed the process established under General Assembly resolution 72/55 on problems arising from the accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

13. States stressed the importance of the full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument to the realization of several of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, in particular Goal 16 and target 16.4. In that context, they committed to undertaking steps to ensure complementary assistance with regard to data collection in support of the Sustainable Development Goals and national reporting under the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. In addition, States identified other actions to

support complementarity, such as coordinating national action plans on small arms with national sustainable development strategies.

14. Significant progress was made on gender-related issues. The outcome document contained strong language on the highly gendered nature of small arms and light weapons. States acknowledged the differing impacts of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on women, men, girls and boys and the need to reflect and mainstream those considerations into all relevant policies and programmes. States called for the full participation and representation of women in the implementation of the Programme of Action and requested coordination between national authorities responsible for implementation and relevant ministries responsible for women's affairs. The value of data disaggregated by gender was recognized.

15. States explored the issue of the diversion of small arms and light weapons to unauthorized recipients, including terrorists, and the dangers posed by the reactivation of deactivated small arms and light weapons. In a dedicated section of the outcome document, States called for an exchange of best practices to ensure irreversible deactivation or destruction and encouraged the adoption of national measures in that regard. They decided that the next biennial meeting of States in 2020 would consider key challenges and opportunities relating to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument for the purpose of preventing and combating the diversion and the illicit international transfer of small arms and light weapons to unauthorized recipients.

16. New developments in small arms and light weapons technology and design continued to draw the attention of States. Implications for the International Tracing Instrument of recent developments in manufacturing, technology and design were addressed, as well as potential opportunities and challenges. States requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report, taking into consideration views submitted by States, on associated technological opportunities and challenges. They requested the Secretary-General to consider in particular the challenges posed by polymer and modular weapons and to make recommendations on ways of addressing them, in view of their potential impact on the effective implementation of the International Tracing Instrument.

B. International cooperation and assistance in the framework of the Programme of Action

17. At the Third Review Conference, a representative of the Secretariat delivered a presentation,[2] based on information and data provided by States in their national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument,[3] on the adequacy of assistance and enhanced funding, providing options for enhanced funding for international assistance and possible sources of improved funding.

18. According to the national reports and the Creditor Reporting System of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development,[4] the amount of international assistance to support implementation of the Programme of Action has decreased. The number of States that were willing to provide international assistance declined from 30 in 2015 to 22 in 2017.

[2] Available from www.un.org/disarmament/revcon3/.

[3] With a view to contributing substantively to meeting discussions, in advance of the Third Review Conference, 117 States submitted national reports which cover the implementation period from 2016 to 2017.

[4] Available from http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=CRS1#.

19. The number of States requesting international assistance, however, has increased, from 40 in 2015 to 59 in 2017. In the most recent national reports, the need for assistance relating to international transfers has also increased. Other thematic issues, such as stockpile management, collection and destruction of weapons and marking and record-keeping, continued to feature prominently in assistance requests.

C. Coordinating Action on Small Arms

20. Coordinating Action on Small Arms was created by the Secretary-General in 1998 as a coordination mechanism within the United Nations system to address the negative impact of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Taking stock of diverse and specialized expertise, 23 partners work together with a view to achieving enhanced coordination on small arms control, the arms trade and ammunition and stockpile management.

21. The principals of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms partners met in May and consolidated United Nations system support for the Secretary-General's agenda for disarmament and his vision for a coherent funding mechanism for small arms.

22. During the reporting period, the Coordinating Action on Small Arms continued to facilitate discussion on relevant issues, including the development and implementation of the International Small Arms Control Standards, improvised explosive devices, weapons and ammunition management in a changing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration context, the impact of arms transfers on human rights (see Human Rights Council resolution 32/12 and A/HRC/35/8), the prevention of acquisition of weapons by terrorists (see Security Council resolution 2220 (2015)), gender and small arms and light weapons,[5] and funding for international assistance through the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation.

D. Group of Interested States for Practical Disarmament Measures

23. The Group of Interested States continued to facilitate the discussion of practical disarmament activities. In preparation for the Third Review Conference of the Programme of Action, the Group highlighted practical and field-oriented approaches to curbing illicit arms flows in Africa. At its meeting in October 2017, participants, including representatives of United Nations entities and regional organizations and civil society experts, discussed relevant topics, including countering transnational arms trafficking in the Sahel and Maghreb regions, physical security and stockpile management in the Economic Community of West African States subregion and more effective peacekeeping operations. At its meeting in May 2017, the Group discussed how to take into consideration gender perspectives, with a view to implementing more effective small arms control measures.[6] The co-chairs recommended, inter alia, enhanced participation and representation of women in policymaking, decision-making, programming and budgeting in small arms-related activities; consideration of the potential impact of gender-based violence when making small arms transfer decisions; and inclusion of gender-sensitive small arms and light weapons control indicators in national action plans on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

[5] See www.seesac.org/gender-and-small-arms.

[6] See the co-chairs' summary, available from https://s3.amazonaws.com/unoda-web/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/outcome-GISmeeting-25May2017-gender.pdf.

E. International Small Arms Control Standards

24. The International Small Arms Control Standards[7] provide practical guidance covering the full life cycle of small arms and light weapons, with a view to reducing the risk of their falling into the hands of criminals, terrorists or others who would misuse them.

25. The International Small Arms Control Standards remained in wide use across the United Nations system during the reporting period, demonstrating their relevance to the work of the United Nations under the humanitarian, peace and security and development pillars. At the end of 2017, the Standards were in use in 111 countries, and the assessment tool,[8] developed by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, had been used in more than 80 States. The Coordinating Action on Small Arms, the custodian of the Standards, broadened their potential applications with the launch of new modules on designing and implementing community safety programming, awareness-raising and women, men and the gendered nature of small arms and light weapons.

26. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa assisted the Governments of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and the Niger to develop national standard operating procedures on small arms stockpile management on the basis of International Small Arms Control Standard No. 05.20, on stockpile management. The Regional Centre also trained national authorities and civil society from the Lake Chad Basin on the Standards and the related assessment tool.

27. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean utilized the International Small Arms Control Standards to support the "laying down of arms" component of the peace process negotiated between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army. The Regional Centre, together with the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, worked with Governments and private security service providers in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru to strengthen regulation and oversight of the use of small arms by private security companies, in accordance with International Small Arms Control Standard No. 03.30, on national regulation of civilian access to small arms and light weapons.

F. United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation

28. In response to States' call for an improved funding mechanism to better match assistance needs with available resources, the United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation was established in 2013. A total of 64 projects on an aggregated budget of $9 million have been implemented since the Trust Facility's inception. To date, 140 States have benefited directly or indirectly from the activities funded by the Trust Facility, and 12 donors[9] have provided financial support.

29. During the reporting period, funded activities included capacity-building for national authorities and civil society organizations, the development of implementation tools and guides, action-oriented research and the development of

[7] Available from www.smallarmsstandards.org.

[8] Available from www.smallarmsstandards.org/tools.

[9] Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

information platforms and databases. Relevant thematic issues included illicit production, tracing, stockpile management, end use/end user control, brokering, gender-related considerations and public awareness-raising.

30. During the reporting period, there were efforts to strengthen implementation of practical activities in the African region, in partnership with regional and civil society organizations. In the greater Sahel region, the African Union developed operational guidelines on weapons stockpile management and provided relevant training courses to national authorities. In West and Central Africa, civil society partners addressed the craft manufacture of small arms, provided policy guidance to States neighbouring countries under arms embargoes and built national capacity to trace small arms that are collected. Two special-circumstances projects, which are undertaken when there is an urgent need to be addressed at any time during the funding cycle, were implemented to assess and relocate stockpile facilities in Eswatini and Saint Lucia.

31. The Trust Facility's call for proposals for projects to be implemented in 2019[10] opened in June 2018. The new thematic priorities for the 2018–2019 cycle further reinforce the integration of arms control efforts into national development agendas, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

[10] See www.un.org/disarmament/unscar.